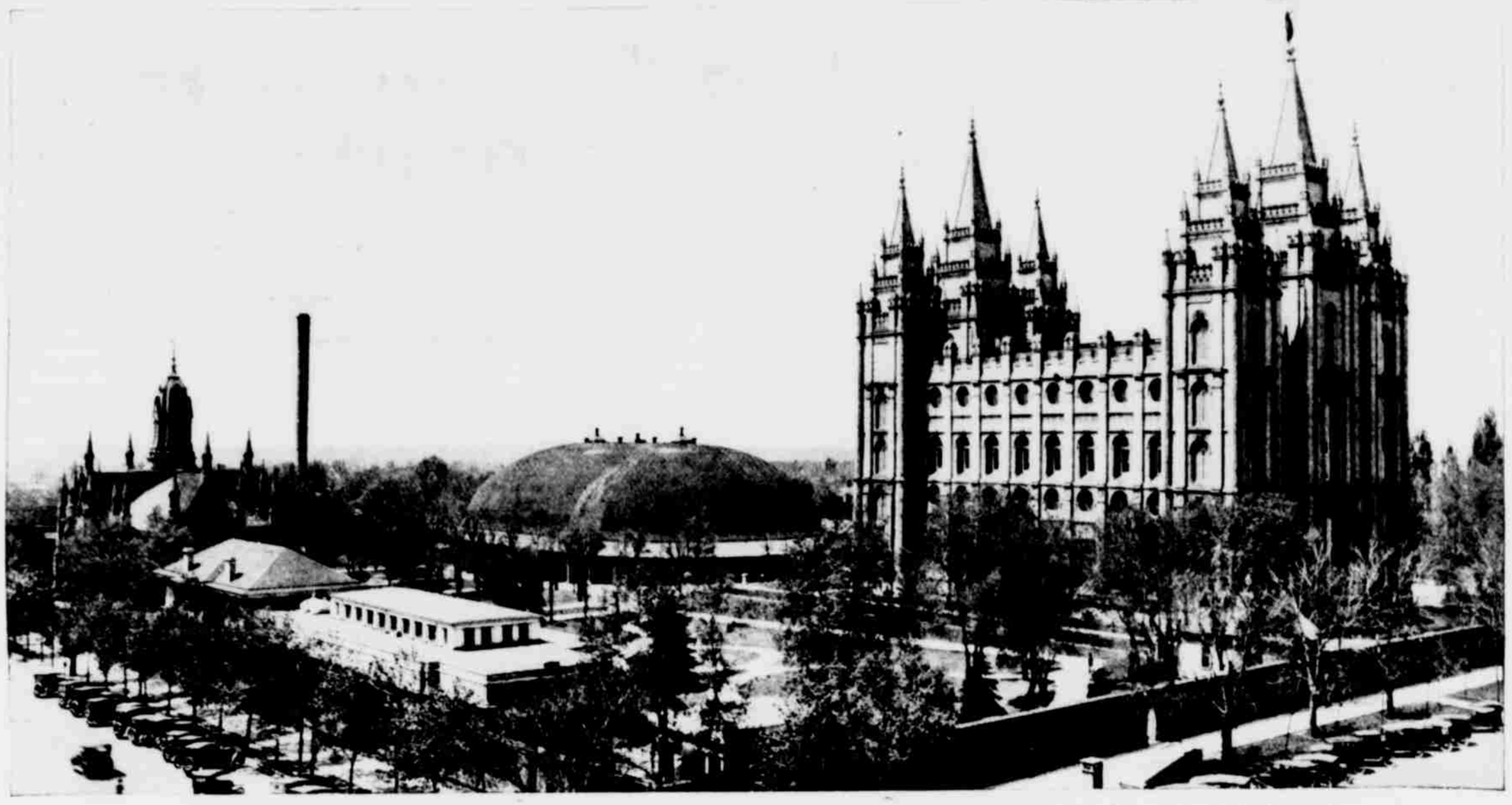

Temple Block, Salt Lake City. Showing the Great Temple of solid granite, the domed Tabernacle, the Assembly Hall in the left background. The lower buildings just inside the wall are occupied by the Bureau of Information.

Mormon Temporalities

By DR. JAMES E. TALMAGE

Of the Council of the Twelve, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

YES, of course, the Mormon church is in business, and big business at that. Not alone in Salt Lake City, which is the seat of the presiding councils of the church, but in every city, town, and village wherein a Mormon community dwells there is outward and visible demonstration of church activity in material affairs.

The present nation-wide depression in building operations and in business generally is evident in the "valleys of the mountains," though less markedly than elsewhere. Chapels, tabernacles, amusement halls, and one temple are in course of erection; and plans for further construction of the kind, now under examination in the office of the church supervisor of buildings, approximate six millions of dollars in estimated cost.

Brief mention of the general plan of church operation may be in place. Territorially the church comprises missions and stakes. Where the Latter-day Saints have gathered in sufficient numbers, as in Utah, Idaho, Oregon, Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico, Nevada, Arizona, Alberta (Canada) and Mexico, they are organized into Stakes of Zion; while the rest of the United States and other countries are districted into distinct missions. A mission comprises conferences, and these are subdivided into branches. Stakes are segregated into wards and branches, and of these subdivisions nearly a thousand have already been organized.

The ward is the territorial and community unit within the stake. At its head stands the bishopric, comprising a bishop and two other high priests known as the bishop's counselors. In lower order of authority are "quorums" of priests, teachers and deacons; and, as helps in government, the several auxiliary organizations are indispensable factors. These latter comprise the Relief Society, which is composed entirely of women; the Sunday school; separate institutions known as the Young Men's and the Young Ladies' Mutual Improvement Associations; the Primary Association for children; and the Religion Classes, which supplement the secular instruction of the public schools by lessons in morals, theology and religion.

This fragment of the elaborate and efficacious plan of church organization should be considered if Mormon activities are to be rightly understood.

From the establishment of Mormondom in the West, dating from the settlement of the pioneers in Salt Lake valley in 1847, the ward has been the social center of the people. Its building equipment has advanced from the single-room meetinghouse of the early days—usually constructed of logs or adobe—to the modern chapel of pressed brick or hewn stone, beautiful in architecture, with auditorium, vestry and numerous classrooms; and the adjoining amusement hall. Only religious services or class exercises closely related thereto are conducted in the chapel; all recreational activities of indoor character are provided for in the amusement hall. Attention is given to training in music, social dancing, dramatics, debating, forum work and pageantry; and in these as in Scouting for the young men, and "Beehive" work for the girls, systematic courses are conducted. The motion picture is a feature of ward recreation; and an effective censorship of subjects is exercised, whereby the films exhibited in the social centers are such as conform as nearly as possible to the church standard of morals.

It should be added that the church engages in no recreational work for profit, its sole purpose being to provide wholesome entertainment at cost; though "benefit" performances or exhibitions are allowed, the proceeds from which are applied to some local need, such as additional equipment, renovation of the amusement hall, beautifying of the grounds, and the like.

For stake assemblies commodious tabernacles have been erected; and for greater gatherings, as those of the general conferences of the church, the great Tabernacle in Salt Lake City is used.

By architects and others the Salt Lake Tabernacle has been pronounced one of the most remarkable auditoriums ever constructed. Its structural plan is simple, comprising essentially a great dome supported by buttressed walls. It was in course of erection from July, 1864 to October, 1867. The building is 250 feet long, and 150 feet in greatest width. From floor to ceiling at the middle the distance is 70 feet; and the network of beams and trusses between ceiling and roof is 10 feet high. The immense dome-roof is of lattice construction and is self-sustaining, there being not so much as a single supporting pillar. More remarkable still, the roof is built entirely of wood and was originally constructed without nails or metal spikes. The enormous beams and trusses were held together by wooden pegs and rawhide thongs. While the Tabernacle was in course of building, iron nails and spikes were obtainable only as they were brought across the plains by wagon and team, and the high cost prevented their use.

Many modern buildings present larger roof-spans, but such are generally constructed of metal. A capacious gallery, 30 feet wide, extends along the inner walls and is broken at the west end only, where it gives place to the grand organ and the seats reserved for the great choir. In contrast with the usual methods of construction this enormous gallery is not continuous with the walls. At intervals of twelve to fifteen feet great beams connect the gallery with the wall buttresses, but between these beams the gallery is set forward two and one-half feet from the inside of the walls, and the open spaces are guarded by a high railing. It is believed that the surprising acoustic properties of the building are due in part to this feature of construction. The great dome is, in fact, a colossal whispering gallery, as the multitudes of visitors who have inspected the building know. When it is emptied save for the few, the fall of a pin dropped at the focal point of the ellipse near one end of the building may be heard at the corresponding point near the other end. The convenient seating capacity of the tabernacle, including the gallery, is nearly nine thousand, though, under conditions of crowding, congregations much larger than this have assembled beneath the dome.

No mention of Mormon buildings would be even half-way complete without reference to the temples, which are uniquely characteristic of this peculiar people. Of the four temples now standing in Utah, that at Salt Lake City was the first begun and the last completed. This splendid structure was forty years in building. The walls are of solid granite eight feet thick in the first story and six feet in the upper part. It is of a style peculiar to itself, not inaptly called "Mormonesque." Many stones of emblematical significance appear, representing sun, moon, stars, the earth and the clouds. On the main inscription stone at the east we read: "Holiness to the Lord," and on the keystones of the arched windows at both east and west ends, "I am Alpha and Omega," and above these is the awe-inspiring emblem of the All-seeing Eye.

The Latter-day Saints have recently completed a temple at Laie, Hawaiian Islands, and another is nearing completion at Cardston, Alberta, Canada. To the Mormons a temple is more than chapel, tabernacle, synagogue or cathedral. Temples are erected and maintained for the solemnization of sacred ordinances, and not as places for general assembly or for ordinary congregational worship.

Another Mormon structure of imposing proportions and striking architectural design bears over its main entrance the unpretentious inscription "L. D. S. Church Offices." Though but about five years old, it is known far and wide. It is essentially a steel structure faced with thick granite, but with foundation benches and supporting columns of solid stone. Within, the ground story and the next above are finished for the main part in highly polished aragonite, which is known in the trade as Utah onyx. This building constitutes the administrative headquarters of the church. It contains the offices and council rooms of the first presidency, the Council of the Twelve Apostles, the First Council of the Seventy, and other presiding authorities. One entire floor is devoted to the work of the church historian; and the greater part of another is given up to genealogical research, which, owing to the practice of vicarious ordinance work for the dead, ranks among the very prominent features of Mormon achievement. The administration of such ordinances in behalf of the departed is carried on in the temples only; and the compilation of accurate genealogical records is a prerequisite thereto.

The church has spent and is spending large sums for the erection and maintenance of hospitals. The

THE DEARBORN INDEPENDENT asked Dr. Talmage to prepare several articles on the activities of the Mormon church. As stated elsewhere, Dr. Talmage is a member of the Council of Twelve, but this fact must not be accepted as indicative of a desire either on the part of Dr. Talmage or this paper to publish anything which may be regarded as of a propaganda nature. Not alone is Dr. Talmage high in the councils of the church, but he is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, of which there are only seven members who are Americans. He is the only American holding life membership. As one of the "Twelve Apostles" of the church he attended the Third World's Christian Citizenship Conference in Pittsburgh, in November, 1919, at which time there was a discussion of Mormonism.